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CHRIS KERN

NIXON'S WATERGATE MEMOIRS

ANNCR :

FORMER PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON'S MEMOIRS ARE APPEARING IN INSTALLMENTS IN A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES THIS WEEK. THE FIRST TWO INSTALLMENTS DESCRIBE HIS RECOLLECTIONS OF WATERGATE AND HIS RESIGNATION FROM OFFICE. CHRIS KERN REPORTS.

VOICE:

RICHARD NIXON NOW ADMITS PARTICIPATING IN THE WATERGATE COVER-UP, BUT HE SAYS HE SAW IT AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM AND NOT AS A CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY TO OBSTRUCT JUSTICE. MR. NIXON SAYS HE SAVED THE TAPE RECORDINGS OF HIS WATERGATE-RELATED CONVERSATIONS BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THEY MIGHT PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM THE CHARGES OF HIS AIDES, BUT HE CONCEDES THAT THEY WERE THE MAIN REASON WHY HE WAS FORCED TO RESIGN FROM OFFICE IN DISGRACE.

FOR THE MOST PART, MR. NIXON'S STORY AGREES WITH PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS OF HIS LAST DAYS IN OFFICE AND WITH HIS OWN BROADCAST RECOLLECTIONS IN A SERIES OF TELEVISION INTERVIEWS LAST YEAR. HIS ADMISSIONS ARE CAREFULLY LIMITED. HE NEVER SAYS DIRECTLY THAT HE TOOK PART IN THE CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY TO OBSTRUCT THE INVESTIGATION OF THE WATERGATE BURGLARY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS. HE IGNORES THE CHARGE OF MISUSE OF THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT WAS ONE OF THE THREE COUNTS OF IMPEACHMENT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. AND HE SHOWS NO SIGN OF REMORSE -- AT LEAST IN THE INSTALLMENTS PUBLISHED SO FAR -- THAT HIS SUBORDINATES USED ILLEGAL AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURES TO SPY ON THOSE THEY CONSIDERED MR. NIXON'S POLITICAL ENEMIES.

MR. NIXON GENERALLY ADHERES TO HIS PAST EXPLANATIONS OF HIS CONDUCT. HE SAYS HE HAD ONLY LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES OF HIS AIDES, THAT HE WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY MANY OF THE REVELATIONS AND THAT HIS JUDGMENT MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY HIS DESIRE TO STAY IN OFFICE. HE SAYS HE HAS NO EXPLANATION FOR THE 18-MINUTE GAP IN A CRITICAL WATERGATE-RELATED TAPE RECORDING, AND HE PORTRAYS THOSE WHO PURSUED THE WATERGATE INVESTIGATION -- PARTICULARLY SPECIAL PROSECUTOR ARCHIBALD COX -- AS POLITICAL OPPONENTS WHO WERE DETERMINED TO REMOVE HIM FROM OFFICE NO MATTER WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWED.

MR. NIXON'S BOOK WILL BE PUBLISHED ON MAY 15, AND THE INSTALLMENTS ARE APPEARING IN NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ALL THIS WEEK. THE NIXON MEMOIRS HAVE DRAWN SOME OPPOSITION FROM AT LEAST ONE GROUP THAT CLAIMS HIS BOOK PRESENTS ONLY A ONE-SIDED VERSION OF EVENTS AND THAT ITS ONLY PURPOSE IS TO MAKE MONEY, BUT THERE'S NO INDICATION YET HOW THE LARGER AMERICAN PUBLIC IS RESPONDING TO THE EXCERPTS.

JS/RCS